

To: Eric Lee, City Planner, City Council Members, and the Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC)

We, the governing board at Davis Community Church, write to ask for the Downtown Davis Specific Plan (DDSP) to increase the maximum building height for our city block to four stories, and accurately depict the historic resources associated with the church.

Here's why:

At Davis Community Church, we celebrate the vision and collaborative planning process you, our leaders, have engaged this last year, culminating in the draft DDSP currently out for public review. Last year, and roughly concurrent with your vision process, we too engaged in our own study, culminating in our VISION2028 statement of vision, values, and anchoring strategies--a guide for our development.

In that statement we affirm that "we exist to tend the wellbeing of the place and people around us." One of our six anchoring strategies specifically relates to the ways we see our community's life integrated into the larger, emerging vision of the DDSP. In that strategy we call ourselves to:

"Steward our land and buildings responsibly for the sake of the future. We will participate with the city of Davis in its new Downtown Plan to help create a thriving and sustainable community. Our land and buildings are of great value in terms of financial and social capital. We must steward this land responsibly; it can fall into ruin and irrelevance or it can be a source of economic, environmental, and relational flourishing for us and the community. How can we be part of a thriving downtown, a model for the way a religious community can help engender a new vision for human community that benefits the region and the planet?"

Recently, the Washington Post ran an article exploring the ways religious communities might help cities overcome the current housing shortage plaguing our country. In "[Cities need housing. Churches have property. Can they work something out?](#)" (November 5, 2019) The author asks, "What would it look like if churches were helping to make affordable housing possible?"

In another essay, "[Affordable, sustainable, high quality urban housing? It's not an impossible dream.](#)" Naomi Stead of the University of Queensland shows how *The Commons*, a medium-density housing development in Brunswick, Australia, fulfills a "triple bottom line" approach—pursuing social, environmental and financial sustainability.

We are a religious community, stewarding a large and valuable asset with room for development around a historic sanctuary building, that wants to partner with others in this city to find ways to fulfill a "triple bottom line" approach, and create what we call a "Common Good Neighborhood". We are currently beginning conversations as a leadership team about the best ways to fulfill our Vision2028.

We note that the draft DDSP identifies our property, especially the partly undeveloped land along 5th between C and D Streets, as an opportunity for infill: "Community-focused housing can occur on sites that are currently underutilized." An illustration "shows the possible addition of housing to the open space at the corner of the Davis Community Church lot" (DDSP: 100). The property is currently zoned C-RI.

We also note that the draft DDSP specifies a maximum of four stories on the south side of our property and three stories on the north side. We would like the DDSP to allow a maximum of

four stories throughout. To achieve our goals for a "triple bottom line"--social, environmental, and financial sustainability--projects that will serve the needs for more affordable housing require an increased economy of scale according to the DDSP Economic Background Analysis.

The Downtown Plan Advisory Committee had several discussions on the building height issue, which resulted in the current three-story limit along Fifth Street to respect the scale of the Old North Davis single family homes. We point out that the property across Fifth Street from us is the Newman Center, another religious use. Parcels both east and west of us along Fifth Street are city-owned, so the north side of our property does not abut any single family uses.

We diligently care for our 93-year-old sanctuary building, having recently invested about \$2M in seismic, roofing, accessibility and energy efficiency improvements. The other buildings on our site have not been designated historically significant, so we request that the plan's historic resources section accurately depict only the sanctuary building. There are two remaining manses (former pastoral residences built by the church, now in private hands) associated with the church on the north side of Fourth Street between E and F Streets, however only one is depicted in the historic resources section. We request that both manses be depicted, as the city's records show these are historically significant.

To summarize, please:

- Zone the entire block of C to D between Fourth and Fifth as Neighborhood Medium, Four Story maximum height;
- Accurately and visually depict the 1926 sanctuary building and two manses as historic resources, but not the more recently constructed buildings on our property.

Thank you,

The Session (governing board) of Davis Community Church